NRCS EDUCATES WATERSHED GROUP

On February 25th, Claron Krogness, NRCS Conservation Planner working in the Whitewater PL-566 Watershed in Southeast Minnesota, gave a presentation on the Watershed Project, to an Olmsted County 4-H group. The group consisted of 55 adults and children from farms and cities throughout Olmsted County. Krogness gave an overview of the Whitewater River Watershed Project, explaining how the project got started. He emphasized that all the conservation work done in the three-county area is voluntary. He talked about the various conservation activities that are occurring in the watershed, and answered questions about these activities.

Claron Krogness, NRCS Conservation Planner for the Whitewater Watershed PL-566 Project, discusses a streambank crossing and planned grazing system demonstration project to a group of 4-H youth and adult leaders.

Krogness led the group to a Streambank Demonstration Site on the Mark Brosig farm. The site uses a combination of high tensile exterior fencing, moveable interior fence, streambank crossings with swing fencing, and rotational grazing to manage livestock grazing along a tributary of the Whitewater River. He explained how pasture is managed by the forage growth and by rotating the livestock through the paddocks based on the amount of forage available. As a paddock's forage is depleted, the livestock are moved into the next paddock, which has been rested to give the forage time to re-grow. Rotating the livestock in this manner ensures adequate feed for the livestock and also ensures optimal forage production from the pasture. The high tensile fence keeps the livestock away from the streambanks, except in areas where they are allowed to cross. Limiting the crossing of the stream to designated areas reduces the streambank erosion which would occur if the livestock were allowed to continually graze the streambanks. In this system, cattle are allowed to graze the streambank for a limited time. Grazing the streambanks for a short period of time allows the cattle to graze down the weeds and unwanted tree growth, thereby allowing the grasses to grow and keep the banks stabilized. With the cattle fenced out of the stream for the majority of the grazing season, an effective grass buffer strip is maintained.

Claron Krogness shows how to look for macro invertebrates, an indicator of a healthy stream**.**

Krogness and the group discussed various conservation work occurring throughout the watershed, including CRP, buffer strips, terracing, waterways, and others. The impact of declining dairy farms throughout the watershed was discussed. The loss of hay on the area's hillsides can lead to an increase in soil erosion. This, of course, requires other conservation practices to replace the hay in rotation in order to control soil erosion. Krogness also talked about the ecology of the stream and showed the group some of the macro invertebrates inhabiting the stream. They discussed how the impacts of conservation work affect not only the human users of the stream but also the non-humans. Populations of certain macro invertebrates in the stream is an indicator of good water quality.